

HANDSOME HARRY

STORIES OF LAND AND SEA.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year Entered as Second Class Matter of the N. Y. Post Office by Frank Tousey

No. 8.

NEW YORK, MARCH 17, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

HANDSOME HARRY

AND THE SECRET POLICE;

OR

PLOT AND COUNTER PLOT.

By Author of "HANDSOME HARRY."

LOUIS DAVIDSON,

1817 CLIFTON

BALTIMORE

ST.

M.D.



Creaking and groaning, the door opened about three feet, and a head was thrust in, the head of a bear. "Mercy!" gasped Cutten again, and rolled over upon his face.

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Stories of Land and Sea.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SECRET OF THE BELLS.

The supper over, the host placed more wine upon the table, and he and his wife departed to their own room.

Ira quietly slipped out after him.

"My friend," he said, "a word with you."

"Aye, your honor," replied the man.

"That story of yours was all bunkum," said Ira. "You are a scoundrel, I can see; but that bell ringing is all rubbish."

The host smiled and looked at his wife, and she smiled, too.

"I can trust you, I think?" he said.

"Yes," replied Ira.

"And for a very good reason," continued the host, "which I will tell you now."

"Tell me about the bells."

"A murder was committed there," said the host, "and I found the dead man by his sledge. But the bells heard now are but an echo produced by the strange formation of the place."

"But when we stopped the bells still went on."

"Because they were my bells," replied the host. "I had notice of your coming, and rang them here to keep you away."

"Why?"

"I thought you were the excise," said the host, lowering his voice, "and we like to keep quiet here. That wine with the yellow seal has never paid duty; so drink and be merry. Ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Ira. "You have tried the trick before."

"And succeeded," replied the host. "We are quiet here."

"For all that," muttered Ira, as he returned to the kitchen, "you are keeping something back from me, my friend. You have some other motive besides the fear of the excise."

He found Ching-Ching in the middle of a song, which, to the great delight of the company, he was singing on his head and beating out a sort of accompaniment with his feet.

The admiration of Samson was made apparent by the oily appearance of his countenance.

"The latest thing," said Tom, pointing at Ching-Ching, and laughing.

"Oh, he's a jewel!" returned Ira, as he sat down and rolled one of his favorite cigarettes.

"If a man can sing at all," he said, as Ching-Ching finished, "he may as well sing with one end on as the other."

"Can you sing?" asked Ira.

"No, he can't," replied Ching-Ching, answering for him.

Bill looked at him with a hazy eye, and snapped his fingers.

"Does yer think," he said, "that you are the only party with a voice?"

"You haven't one," persisted Ching-Ching.

"Ax Cutten if I ain't."

"You've a voice," replied Cutten, "as meller as a horgan."

"There," said Bill, "and what do you think of that?" and, leaning back, he took another draught of the wine with the yellow seal.

But Ching-Ching was not content and, taking his seat with a languid air, he said:

"Much berrer to sing more and talk less."

"Sing, sing!" cried the men. "Give us a song, Mr. Grunt."

"I don't want to spile the cap'en's peace," replied the boatswain. "I've got more consideration for him than some people."

"You won't disturb me," said Harry, with a quiet wink at Tom; "in fact, I should very much like to hear you, Grunt. I am very fond of singing."

There was no getting out of it now, and Bill saw that he was in for it. Putting down his pipe, he opened his mouth to begin, when Ching-Ching softly interposed:

"On your head, Missa Grunt," he said, "on your head."

"Not the first werse," pleaded Bill.

"Oh, yes," said Ching-Ching. "I begin my song dat way and finish him so."

"I'm radder out of practice," said Bill Grunt, looking round for a little support and finding none, "and perhaps I shall make a mess of it."

"Oh, you much berrer try," urged Samson.

"Much berrer," said Ching-Ching.

"You can only try and fail," urged Tom. "Go in and win."

"All right, your honor," replied Bill Grunt, rendered reckless by his potations. It is astonishing what an ass a man will make of himself while under the influence of drink. Bill stood up to make the effort.

The first step was, of course, to get upon his head, which was no slight feat for him to perform, for never since the days of his childhood had he attempted such a thing. Now, however, he boldly went in for it.

His first attempt ended in a failure to get on his legs at all, but putting a little more power into the second he went clean over, and would have gone into the fire if Tom had not timely caught hold of his feet.

"You can't do it, Grunt," said Tom, who,

like the majority of the spectators, was half choked with laughter.

"I can, your honor," persisted the boatswain; "give me that bottle, Cutten."

He took another draught, handed back the bottle, and wildly pitched upon his hands and hoisted his feet into the air. The impetus, as before, was a little too great, and over he went right on the top of Cutten, who was engaged in putting the bottle back into its place.

The boatswain was no light-weight, and he knocked down both his friend and the seat he sat upon, broke the bottle, and brought the ruby from Cutten's nose.

As a little stimulus for himself, he received the other's wooden leg in the centre of his spine.

"What are you up to, Will?" roared old Cutten.

"There she—e—lay—in the—e—bay—all in that bay o' Biscay, oh," says Bill, quite oblivious of the fact that he had overbalanced himself. "Don't hold my legs, Cutten. I can get on werry well."

"And now the cannings roar
'Long the frightened she—ore—
His she—ip the Wictory named—
Long be that wictory famed—
Fo—o—or wictory cre—owned the day."

"If somebody don't drag this old 'un off the top o' me I shall be smothered," gasped old Cutten. "Hact like a man, and get up."

"There's another werse," said Bill, either not hearing or ignoring the foregoing touching appeal, "but I forgets the bearings of it."

"Try back," suggested Tom.

"I'm on some o' the bits o' that bottle," groaned Cutten. "Am I to be cut to pieces?"

"Oh, help him up," said Harry, whose sides literally ached with laughter. "I think we may fairly say that Mr. Grunt's performance concludes the evening's entertainment. One more glass round and then to bed. Grunt, you've done well."

"Hage," said the boatswain, looking about him with an air of satisfaction, "hav'n't impaired my voice—"

"Or lightened your weight," grumbled

old Cutten, who looked as if he had been run through a mangle.

"To rest," cried Harry, and the host, entering with candles, volunteered to show him to a room.

"No," he said, "we are out upon the war-trail, and until my task is done I camp with my men. Strew some rags upon the floor—they will suffice."

The host bit his lips, but whatever might be the feeling he labored under, he gave no other sign, and did as he was bidden. In half an hour the house was wrapped in gloom and silence. Outside the snow was quietly falling, and all there was silent, too.

CHAPTER II.

A CHECK.

"Your excellency, it is almost morning," said the host, shaking Handsome Harry by the shoulder.

"Morning?" repeated Harry, sleepily, and, turning over again, slept as deep as ever.

"He sleeps, Madge," said the host, with a sly look at his wife, who was standing by with her arms folded.

"He ought to—he is young," she said.

"But some are past their prime," said the host, pointing to the recumbent forms of the others, who were one and all wrapped in the profoundest slumber. Madge nodded, and then they both laughed.

"Your excellency, it is almost morning—nay, it is morning, as the world goes. Awake!"

"I—I—why—what is it?" cried Harry, starting up. "I do not usually sleep so soundly."

"It is our keen and bracing air," said the host.

"What is the hour?"

"Nine."

"Come, rouse up there!" cried our hero, addressing the others. "You have slept long enough."

One by one they slowly opened their eyes, yawned and stretched their arms.

"I have slept soundly," said one.

"Like the dead," said another.

Bill Grunt took a deal of extra shaking, and when at last they got him upon his feet he seemed to be in great doubt as to where he was. But this in his case caused no surprise; the wonder was that no man seemed to have awakened or turned in the night.

"We are like schoolboys," said Ira, "instead of being like hardy travelers."

"It is the keen air," remarked the host, rubbing his hands and smiling.

"You said that before," returned Harry, frowning slightly. "Have the horses been fed?"

"Your excellency or some of your friends have the key."

"True," said our hero.

"And as you would not trust me last night," continued the host, in his softest tones, "would it be well to trust me this morning?"

"Ira," said Harry, "take two or three men and see to it."

"You must make a passage through the snow," said the host; "it has fallen heavily in the night."

And so they found it; the fall and the drift filled the yard to the depth of nearly four feet.

Harry stood at the back door for a moment, and saw no signs of footmarks in the snow. In his heart he had been suspicious of their host, and thought that this sound sleep had not been brought about by accident. He felt sure now that he was mistaken.

Returning to the kitchen, he found breakfast progressing.

Bread, coffee and unlimited bear-steaks, with a few eggs and a ham.

"All that my poor house affords," said the host.

"It is enough," replied Harry.

Ira came dashing into the room with a startled face.

"The horses!" he cried.

"What of them?" asked Harry.

"All dead!"

"Dead?"

"Aye—dead and cold!"

"It is the air," said the host, turning a steak upon the gridiron; "it was too keen for them."

"There has been some foul play here,"

said Harry, casting a threatening look at him.

"Your excellency," said the host, "I am not a spirit. I cannot glide over snow or through a deal door. You had the key, and the snow was unbroken this morning."

"True," muttered Harry, "but it is more than strange that all should be dead. I'll go and look at them."

He hurried to the stables, followed by the others, who crowded round the door and looked in with anxious faces. It was too true—the six horses lay cold and stiff.

"What shall we do now?" said Ira; "go back?"

"No," returned Harry; "at least I do not. Where are the sledges?"

"Here, in the coach-house."

"You will find in them snowshoes and skates in case of an accident."

Ira made an examination of the lockers and found the articles named—a pair of skates and snowshoes for each man—a wise precaution of those who had furnished the sledges.

"I have no proof of foul play," said Harry, "but henceforth I trust no man but ourselves. Let each man take a pair of skates and snowshoes and keep them, if he values his life. We may want both presently."

This was done and all the spare ammunition and arms were taken out and divided, too. The powder gave about thirty-six rounds to each man.

"It only remains for us to divide now," said Harry. "Those who go with me, remain; those who wish to return, cross over."

Not a man stirred.

"I am proud of you, my lads," said Harry, with a smile.

They answered him with a ringing cheer, which brought the host to the door.

He gave one glance at the snowshoes and skates, and bit his lips. He looked like a man who had forgotten something.

Ching-Ching caught the expression of his face, and drew Harry's attention to it.

"I see," said our hero, "and I will remember."

They re-entered the house and sat down to their morning meal.

It was now daylight, at least as much

daylight as they could hope for, and there were no lights but the fire burning.

"Will your excellency drink wine?" asked the host.

"No," replied Harry, "nothing but coffee; neither me nor my men."

"Your excellency is abstemious."

"We're men, and not tipplers, in my country."

The misfortune which had fallen upon them, vexatious as it was, did not interfere with their appetites, and all the good things disappeared rapidly.

Some of the men complained of nausea, and Bill Grunt declared "that his head ached fit to split," but they speedily got over their respective disorders.

"Your excellency will stay to-day?" said the host.

"No, I go at once."

"Impossible. The snow is not fit to travel on before it has had one day's sun and one night's frost."

"That is true enough," said Ira Staines, who had had some Canadian experience; "it will not bear us until to-morrow."

Harry groaned. He could not help it.

"Was there ever such an unfortunate man as I am?" he said. "I am getting worn out with vexatious delay."

"This is a country of delays," said the host. "I have had travelers snowed here for weeks. You are fortunate to have only one day."

"And my horses dead."

"They would have been of no use living, your excellency."

That was true enough. What horses could have traveled in four feet of snow?

"So be it, then," said Harry. "We will rest here a day."

The sun shortly after broke out and on the motion of Ching-Ching the men were divided into two parties, and went outside for a snowballing match.

Harry alone remained within, thinking over something that had entered his mind.

Outside, the merriment grew fast and furious; a mimic fort was constructed under the superintendence of Ching-Ching, and Bill Grunt was appointed to head a storming party. Gallantly he rushed upon the ramparts, and then the whole thing gave

way, and he was buried in about twenty feet of snow with several others.

The defenders quickly extricated them, but they would have missed old Cutten if his wooden leg had not broken through and stood up like a little post. When they got him out he was half dead.

"It ain't play," he gasped; "it's a wile attempt to have the life of—of—somebody."

"All fair in the straddlegum of war," said Ching-Ching.

"Don't talk to him," said Bill Grunt. "Forrard, my hearties."

And this time he got the better of Ching-Ching, for he renewed the attack so suddenly that that worthy was taken aback, bowled over and half buried before Samson and the others could come to the rescue.

It was no child's play, to say the least of it.

In about an hour a truce was established, and the hot and thirsty men went into the house for a drink.

To their surprise, Harry ordered them coffee.

"Ask no questions," he said, "but drink as if you had been accustomed to it."

When the men had refreshed themselves they went out to resume their sport, and Harry, remembering the manuscript which had been intrusted to him by Tyneford, resolved to read it.

The conditions under which it was given might not be exactly fulfilled, but he was not likely to go back there for a while, and there could be no harm in looking at it.

He unfolded the paper, and found that it was brief and written carefully in a clear hand, a little shaky here and there, but very readable throughout.

Drawing his chair closer to the fire and sitting with his back to the light, he folded back the first page and began:

"Whoever takes up this manuscript," it ran, "and reads it through will learn a strange story. I, the writer, John Thorn, but now known by the name of Tyneford, was a yeoman in Sussex, on the estate of Sir Darnley Darnley, who married Lady Augusta Churchill, a lady of marvelous beauty. The Churchills were a wild lot—I mean the boys—and the youngest, at a very early age, had to decamp for some bit of rascality, and in a few months a report came from Aus-

tralia that he had landed there and got murdered in a gambling riot.

"My lady was much cut up about it, but Sir Darnley, who for years had done nothing but pay debts for his brother-in-law, was not much grieved, you may be sure.

"Sir Darnley loved my lady, or perhaps I ought to say he worshiped her, and men who love like that are sure to be jealous.

"He was jealous, and mighty jealous, too, and used to keep an eye upon all the butterflies that were constantly dangling about her.

"She liked admiration, but she was a true woman, and for a long time kept them all aloof.

"I was a favorite tenant of Sir Darnley, and used to be often consulted by him about the repairs of the estate, which took me to the hall at least twice a week, and I used to get there from my farm by a short cut through the wood.

"One night—never shall I forget that night—it was hot and sultry, and a heavy thunder-storm had been rumbling about the horizon for an hour or more; I left my house to tell Sir Darnley of something which had come under my notice during the day, and, taking my gun on my arm to knock over any weazel or strat I might see sneaking about, I passed into the wood.

"My footsteps were scarcely to be heard upon the soft turf, and my spirit, being depressed a bit, I did not hum a tune or whistle as I generally did.

"I was about half-way through the wood when I saw a man and womar together, walking silently.

"The man, who was a stranger to me, had his arm round the waist of the woman, and that woman was my lady.

"You might have knocked me down with a straw, I was so confounded.

"They passed, and I went mechanically on.

"My darling Augusta!" said the man, and, drawing her close to him, he kissed her.

"Now, there was but one interpretation to put upon such conduct, and, like a man who had received a mortal stroke, I turned away. Twenty yards further I met Sir Darnley.

"What is the matter with you, Thorn?" he asked.

"I had no power to restrain my tongue—it spoke for itself, and I told him all.

"I have never seen such a change as came over his face, either before or since.

"He did not answer me, but wrested my gun from my hand and dashed toward the spot.

"He was out of sight in a moment; but before I could fairly start to follow him I heard a report and an awful shriek.

"Maddened, I reached the place and saw Sir Darnley standing with a gun in his hand.

"At his feet was the corpse of the man I had seen, and standing by his side was my lady, with an awful look upon her face.

"Darnley," she cried, "what have you done?"

"Slain a villain," he cried.

"Fool!" she answered, "it is poor Reginald, my brother."

"I paused no more, but ran home like a madman, feeling that I had wrought this mischief.

"An hour later Sir Darnley came to my house.

"Thorn," he said, hoarsely, "I must fly and hide from man from this time. Will you come with me?"

"It was my duty, and I went; I had led to the wrong, and it was fitting I should share his exile.

"I left wife, children, kindred all; he did the same, and together we fled and journeyed across the continent, by the by-ways, until we reached Russia, and settled in this lone spot, where this manuscript will be found when both of us are dead and gone."

Here the manuscript ended, but over leaf was a postscript freshly written, apparently while Harry was staying there:

"I have altered my mind. I cannot keep my secret. To you, stranger, I intrust it, and more. Sir Darnley never rests at night, but wanders round and round the house. It was his voice you heard shrieking, 'Lost! ruined! wrecked!' Do not betray him; his life may be forfeit for his crime by the laws of the land, but he has paid the full penalty long ago."

"A strange story," mused Harry, as he folded the manuscript and replaced it in

his pocket. "I wonder what has become of his wife, and whether he had any children."

He little thought how soon he was to learn something of both.

CHAPTER III.

TIT FOR TAT.

The snow-balling was kept up until darkness came, when the second meal was prepared, and once more coffee was ordered by Harry for the men to drink.

The host seemed surprised.

"No wine, your excellency?" he said.

"None," returned Harry, "until after dinner. Then bring us some with the yellow seal."

The eyes of the host brightened, and he gave vent to a sly chuckle.

He thought he was unobserved, but Harry had his eye upon him.

Beckoning to Ira and Tom, our hero held a short conference with them and imparted something to them which raised upon their faces a look of surprise.

"Sumfin up, Sammy," said Ching-Ching.

"Where?" demanded Samson, looking in every direction.

"Wif Missa Harry and de officers," said Ching-Ching, "and I tink dere be a lilly bit ob fun afore de night out."

"What you mean, Chingy?"

Chingy winked, but said nothing.

Harry came back to his seat, and the dinner was disposed of in the usual masterly way.

Then, in obedience to a command from Harry, the host went out to fetch the wine.

He presently came back with a bottle in each hand, his wife following and bearing the same.

"Give me two jugs," said Harry.

They were passed to him.

"Empty a bottle into each of them."

The host drew the corks and his wife poured out the wine.

Harry took one of the jugs in his hand and held it toward the host.

"Drink!" he said.

"Ah, your excellency," replied the Rus-

sian, bowing low, "it is too much a good wine for me."

"You shall drink," said Harry, sternly; "do my bidding."

The man paused half way in another bow and looked toward the door.

"Guard that," said Harry, pointing toward it.

Ching-Ching and Samson were there in a moment, the former remarking:

"I told you so, Sammy."

"Now," said Harry, drawing a pistol and looking at his watch, "I give you ten minutes to drink that wine. If you refuse longer, be prepared to take the consequences."

"My head," said the host, meditating, "is light and not accustomed to strong drink. It makes me sleep."

"You will not be harmed in your sleep."

"Give me your word," eagerly cried the Russian.

"Drink," said Harry, "you have my word of honor."

The man took up the jug and drained the wine to the dregs.

"Now, madam," continued our hero, taking up the other, "it is your turn."

"I'll not touch it," she replied.

"You shall."

"Do you forget that I am a woman?"

"No, and you shall be treated as one. Drink!"

She took up the jug and drank the contents deliberately.

"Well?" she said, as she finished.

"Sit there," said Harry, pointing to a settle whereon her husband was already seated; "you will not be harmed."

Already the wine was beginning to take effect, for it was, as Harry had suspected, heavily drugged, and it was only the strong constitution of himself and his men which had held back its powers for a while on the previous evening—she faltering once or twice on her way to the seat.

Having reached it, she leaned her head in the corner and went off.

Five minutes later her husband joined her.

"As I suspected," said Harry; "we were drugged last night, and while we slept our horses poisoned."

"But there were no footmarks in the snow," said Tom.

"The work was done early," replied Harry, "and a heavy fall and the drift sufficed to hide them. Do you want further proof than that?"

"No," replied Tom.

"Bind them to their seats and leave them till the morning. Then look into the cellars and see if they have any wine of another seal."

A considerable quantity was found, and some of it having been tasted, Harry asked for a volunteer to drink some to see if it was drugged.

Ching-Ching advanced and quietly disposed of half a bottle.

The only effect it had upon him was to make him musical.

"I think we may drink this," said Harry.

And, with their host and hostess looking like two horrible images in the corner, they made another merry night of it, and it was nearly midnight before all were asleep.

Harry was the last to lie down, and ere he trusted himself to slumber he made a full examination of the prisoners' bonds.

Both were bound hand and foot.

CHAPTER IV. 85

A DREAM AND A WAKING.

There must be something in dreams, let people say what they will, for how is it that our mind in sleep often points with unerring finger to the future, and dark and terrible things come forth shadowed distinctly?

On this night Harry dreamed that he was alone upon a wide field of ice, with a dark and cheerless sky above and silence on every side.

He thought he had journeyed far; that he was fatigued and stood in need of rest.

He, however, did not care to lie down, not that he felt cold, for he seemed to be afire, but the loneliness and desolation oppressed him, and he dare not.

So he kept on and on, the darkness growing deeper and deeper, and the snow began to fall.

With it came the wind, sweeping by in cold, biting blasts.

"To rest now is death," he thought. "I must find a shelter somewhere."

And while the thought was in his dreaming mind a house uprose before him, and he beheld something standing at the door beckoning him in.

He strove to reach that house, but in vain.

As he advanced, so it receded with the two figures, who wore mocking smiles upon their faces.

Suddenly they held up some snowshoes, and with a shriek of laughter disappeared.

Is there anything in dreams?

Who shall say?

If they have no method, they have strange coincidences.

Harry awoke and beheld his host and hostess stealing softly across the room.

Fortunately he lay in the shade, or they would have perceived his opening eyes.

But they saw him not, and with cautious steps trod between the sleepers.

On the settle lay their bonds, not unfastened, but intact.

All the knots were there, and they had slipped out of the ropes as easily as most men get out of a coat.

In those days the Davenport Brothers and their famous trick were unknown, and Handsome Harry was much puzzled.

But it was no time to lie thinking over what had been done.

They had left the room and he must follow them.

His first thought was that they were going to fly, but the absurdity of such an idea speedily became apparent.

Whither would they fly without horses and—

Stay!

There were the snowshoes and skates.

"And yet they must leave the inn behind," thought Harry; "and if I judge my Russian friend aright, that would go sorely against his grain. Cupidity is written in every feature."

He opened the door softly and peeped out.

The passage was empty and the back door was open.

They had crossed the yard, and hastily following them up, Harry beheld the pair

entering the shed where the sledges, the skates and snowshoes were.

They had no need to conceal their footsteps, for the Belvederes, in their exciting contest on the previous day, had trodden the snow hard and firm, and no fresh flakes had fallen.

Above, the sky was filled with stars, shining with unwonted brilliancy.

Just as Harry was preparing to follow them the Russian and his wife emerged, each with an armful of skates, which they laid upon the ground.

Then the woman went back, and the man, after carefully taking the bearings of the place on which he stood, proceeded to scrape the snow away.

In a few minutes he laid bare a spot about two yards wide, and Harry could just make out what appeared to be the lid of a well.

He read the fellow's purpose now, and he was on the point of rushing out and giving the alarm, when the woman came back.

"It's a poor hiding-place," she said, "for the ice is very thick."

"Aye, a curse upon it!" replied the Russian; "but bad as it is, it is better than none. I do not think they will dream of looking here."

He raised the lid and looked down, the woman standing by.

"The water is higher than usual," he retorted, "and I can almost touch the ice. But I think the place will do."

"But why hide them at all?" asked his wife.

"It is safest," replied the man. "They might rescue them from the fire."

"Suppose it reaches the house?" said the woman, uneasily.

"It will not reach it," he replied; "the wind lies another way."

Harry heard, but he failed to see the drift of their words.

They were plain enough a little later on.

The woman worked well, and the man packed skilfully.

In ten minutes the skates and snowshoes were stowed away.

This done, the lid of the well was put on, the snow replaced and carefully trodden

down.

The hiding-place was complete.

Harry expected they would now return to the house.

But no; they both went back to the shed, and shut the door behind them.

Our hero reflected a little, but he could not perceive what object they had in view.

There was nothing in the place that he cared a straw for now.

"They are destroying the sledges, I suppose," he thought. "Well, it matters nothing to me. I would have made them a present to the fools."

He quietly returned to his resting-place and lay down.

All his followers were in sound sleep, except Bill Grunt, who seemed to be struggling with a nightmare in the form of Ching-Ching, as he gasped and groaned and uttered that worthy's name with tremendous emphasis.

But the struggle, happily, was soon over, and he joined his comrades in a musical snore.

Shortly after, the Russian and his wife came creeping in, so softly that they might have been ghosts or shadows, and Harry looked on with amazement as they quietly and skillfully insinuated their limbs into the loops of the cord and feigned slumber.

They appeared to be as securely bound as ever.

It may readily be imagined that Harry slept no more, but turned himself into sentinel, and there he lay, with his eyes upon the two cunning Russians, who had performed the cleverest feat it had ever been his lot to witness.

Just behind them was a window looking upon the back yard, but across it now a common curtain was drawn.

It was red, and any light behind it would naturally show quickly, but the light of dawn, which Harry longed to see there, was yet some hours away.

Suddenly the red curtain was illuminated with a bright, fierce light, but ere Harry could imagine the cause it was gone.

"It must be somebody with a lantern," he thought. "But who can it be?"

The light flashed up again, and rising, he hurried to the window and drew the curtain.

Then the truth was revealed, and turning round, he cried out, in a voice of thunder:

"Fire!"

Up sprang every man to his feet, and the two Russians gave a cry of surprise.

"Oh, where, where?" cried the Russian. "Save my poor house!"

"Silence!" returned Harry.

He knew all now.

"My men, the stables are on fire!"

"A spark from the chimney must have——" began the Russian, when Harry turned upon him a look which could not be mistaken.

"Speak again," he said, "on peril of your life. Ira, remain here with two men to take charge of these people. If they annoy you with their chatter, you know what to do. The rest follow me."

CHAPTER V.

HOIST WITH HIS OWN PETARD.

As soon as the Belvederes were outside they all saw that nothing could be done with the stables.

One side was in a mass of flames, and the red light was running rapidly along the roof inside, and even breaking through the snow.

There was no water at hand, but Ching-Ching facetiously suggested that Bill Grunt and Cutten should be put to work to snowball it out, a suggestion which brought upon him a cart-load of vituperation from the gentlemen in question.

"I wonder the cap'en don't keep him in horder," said Bill.

"Some people can do everything and some can't do nothing," replied Cutten. "But every dawg'll have his day, and some on 'em will get their rope yet."

He had scarcely uttered the words when a large snowball caught him in the nape of the neck, and there was Ching-Ching in earnest conversation with the leader.

Samson was on the other side.

"Some people are mighty innercent," growled Cutten. "But my turn will come. I've got a lump o' hice settling down. See if you can fish him out, Bill."

Bill endeavored to perform this good office, but he only succeeded in pushing the lump of ice or snow down to about the middle of Cutten's spine, where it speedily

melted, to the great and exceeding comfort of that able seaman.

"Nothing can save that place," said Harry.

"Axin' your pardon, sir," said Bill Grunt, "but them 'ere skates and snowshoes is there."

"All right, Grunt, and thank you."

"Hadh't we better try to save 'em, sir?"

"No, I don't think we need trouble."

"He must be right orf his head," said Bill, wonderingly.

"P'raps you berrer tell him so," said Ching-Ching in his ear.

"You can tell him if you like," growled Bill.

"And what de matter wif Missa Cutten dat him wriggle so?"

"Mayhap you don't know?" returned Cutten.

"Oh, no; me not a doctor," said Ching-Ching. "Sammy know dat."

"Oh, yes, me know him," confirmed Samson, who had not heard a word.

"I wonder what caused this fire," said Cutten, ignoring the ruffians, Samson and Ching-Ching.

"We hab no circlestamshel ebidence ob de fact," promptly answer the latter, "but de cap'en tink dat Missa Grunt must hab got up in de night and rub him nose 'against de thatch."

Bill had a red nose, a little redder, perhaps, for his little indulgence on that musical evening already described, but it was a gross libel to assert that it was capable of causing a conflagration.

Turning round, he aimed a blow at Ching-Ching, who, however, ducked nimbly out of the way and gave old Cutten the benefit of the boatswain's good intentions.

Cutten received the blow just under the fifth rib, and, but for a bed of snow which received his manly form, he would have fallen heavily.

The voice of Harry bidding the men go in and hasten breakfast cut short all discussion upon the subject, and Samson and Ching-Ching, arm in arm, led the way with a grace which few people have ever attained and none ever surpassed.

Tom, acting upon instructions, set the Russian free, and bade him get breakfast ready.

"And be quick," he added, "for we must be going."

"The snow is deep," said the host.

"We must be going, nevertheless," returned Tom.

The Russian, as soon as his back was turned, indulged in a malevolent grin, but he knew better than to disobey commands, and he set about breakfast quickly, cutting up and cooking more of the bear.

"You can cook on," said Tom, when enough for the meal was prepared; "we shall want a day or two's rations to take with us."

"You'll never eat them," muttered the Russian. "Long ere that you will all be under the snow."

But he continued his cooking, and his wife, still bound, sat by looking on.

The Belvederes sat down and made a merry meal.

It was more than half over, when smoke was seen creeping beneath the door.

"What is that?" cried the Russian, turning pale.

Harry went to the window, drew the curtain and disclosed the fact that the short day was at hand.

"My friend," he said coolly, "the wind has changed."

The Russian uttered an awful cry and sank upon the settle by the side of his wife, who stared at our hero aghast.

"The stable," he said, "still burns merrily, and the flames rise higher and higher, and if the wind increases what can save your house?"

"What can save any of us?" said the Russian, sullenly. "What can save you?"

"I leave here in a few minutes," replied Harry.

"You make a journey across the snow?" said the woman, with a sneer. "Well, go; you will find that there are crevices and drifts, wide and deep enough to bury ten times your number, and when you are dead there will be no lack of wolves to pick your bones."

"Bind that man again," said Harry, "but not too fast. That will do, Ira. Now, all outside prepare. Divide the rations, and let each man take a bottle of wine. Not that with the yellow seal."

They all went out, and Harry was left alone with the Russians. fire your house. It is the work of your own hand. Reap the reward of your labors.

"You are clever people," he said; "but look there." Farewell!"

By a great exertion of strength he wheeled them, settle and all, round so that they could look out of the window. "May the snow bury you!" cried the man. "And the wolves devour you!" added the woman.

There were the men busily distributing the skates and snowshoes and putting on the latter. Harry smiled and left the room. He had no faith in curses.

"You see?" said Harry. Of a surety, if the anathemas of man were of any avail, the earth itself would have been scattered to the four winds.

The Russian saw and groaned. The Belvederes were not accustomed to snowshoes, but Jack is a very adaptable creature, and the feeling of awkwardness promised soon to wear away.

"Foiled every way," said Harry. "Now tell me who bade you attempt to stop me?"

"Nobody," replied the Russian. "Fall in!" cried Harry, and took his place at their head.

"Will you not tell?" asked Harry, turning to the woman. "All ready, then?"

"Not if the words would save my life and bring me untold gold," she answered, with a vicious glare. "I hate you!"

"What have I done to cause you to hate me?" "Aye, aye, sir."

"I hate all that is young and full of life," she replied. "I hate all that is noble and good. I loathe the sight of those who are happy." "Every man with his rations, ammunition and wine?"

"You need not loathe me, then," said Harry, smiling sadly. "Aye, aye, sir."

"I hate you anyway," returned the woman. "Go, and perish in your vain search. You ne'er will find him." "Forward, then."

"Never," replied the Russian, with a triumphant leer. And the procession set out over the snow-covered plain.

"In what way are you bound to him?" Many were the tumbles, and much the laughter that ensued.

asked Harry. "He, like myself, must be a stranger to you. Has he given you money? But who cared?

If so, name the sum and I will give you double." None, except old Cutten, whose wooden leg was a little awkward; but, with the help of his faithful friend, Bill Grunt, he got on very fairly.

For a moment the man wavered, but he looked at the woman, whose face was very bitter, and stood firm. On the top of a slope Harry paused and looked round.

"I have nothing to say," he said. "Take my curse and go." The inn was now one mass of flame, roaring and leaping as if with joy over the work of destruction, and close by were two dark specks standing in the snow.

"Then I will find the man I seek without you," replied Harry, "and will leave you here." These were the Russian and his wife.

"Bound as we are?"

"You forget yourself. Those bonds are nothing to you. Ten minutes after we are gone you will be free."

"And homeless!" said the Russian, with a savage cry. "Where shall we rest to-night?" asked Tom, when the greater part of the day was past.

"My friend," returned Harry, "I did not

CHAPTER VI.

AN AWFUL NIGHT.

"We have two good hours to think about that, Tom."

"But the men are fatigued; they are not accustomed to this sort of exercise, and sev-

eral of them are complaining of snow-blindness."

"Poor fellows," said Harry, "just like me—thoughtless of all things save those which concern myself."

"There is not a man here who will echo that condemnation," said Ira, warmly, "or complain of suffering arising from your service."

"You fellows spoil me," returned Harry. "What now, Samson?"

The negro had halted and joined the officers, with rather an anxious look upon his face.

"Me hear the death hum, Massa Harry," he said.

"What is that?"

"Me not know, but him always come when peopl die."

"You are full of fancies, Samson."

"No, Massa Harry; but me hear tum-tum-tum in my ear all de day, and now de air am full ob it."

"Dat," said Ching-Ching, cheerfully, "am de beating ob de drum ob de ear, Sammy."

Samson was in no humor for joking, and his eyes looked wildly over the landscape.

"He's not well," said Harry. "Halt there."

The men pulled up and gathered in a wondering circle round the negro and the officers.

"Massa Harry," said Samson, "where am dis?"

"In Russia, my good fellow."

"But me thought dat it was all snow dere."

"So it is."

"No, Massa Harry; dere am de palm-tree and de riber. But it so bery cold."

He paused, and, shuddering, sat down.

"That won't do," whispered Ira Staines; "if he takes to that he is a gone coon."

"His African blood cannot stand the total change," said Harry. "Come, Samson, we must be moving."

Samson stared at him vacantly, but never stirred.

"You must not sit there. Are you unwell?"

"No, Massa Harry, me bery well, but so bery cold."

"Where are you cold?" asked Ching-Ching affectionately.

"In de feet."

"All right, Sammy," cried Ching-Ching, like one inspired; "it only a lilly frost-bite. Hold dis rumrella here, and off wif him boots."

In a twinkling this was done, and Ching-Ching bade two of the men rub one limb with snow while he operated on the other. Harry knelt down and held the head of the dark sufferer.

"Soon be all right, Sammy," said Ching-Ching, who never could keep silent. "De lilly blood got him choke up in de limb, and de head go a lilly wrong. Rub away, and we make de ole boy right afore you say chopstick. How dat, Sammy?"

"Dat bery lubly," replied Samson, slowly coming round under the vigorous treatment superintended by his warm friend.

"One—two—lilly more rub," said Ching-Ching; "now on wif him stocking and boot. Stand up, Sammy—dat it. Ha, ha! de ole boy am right again."

It was the first time that Ching-Ching had ever been heard to laugh outright. Smile he did, as a rule, but he had never laughed before. Samson responded with a regular roar—he was fully restored.

"Tank you, Chingy, and genlymen all," he said; "I quite right now."

"How about the death hum, Samson?" asked Harry.

"Him a great humbug," replied Samson; "him gone away."

Samson's attack happily over, they moved on, but the delay had been considerable, and night was drawing on. The prospect was far from pleasing.

Before and behind them stretched the wide plain, with here and there a leafless tree stretching out its crooked arms. On the right was a large frozen lake, and on the left, about ten miles off, was a dense and dismal wood.

They had lost sight of the inn hours before, and there was no sign of man around them.

"But half an hour more daylight," muttered Harry, as he surveyed the scene. "What is to be done?"

In this strait he resolved not to rely upon

himself, but laid the case frankly before them all, and declared himself open to any suggestion.

Shelter being the prominent desire, and the wood being the only place which afforded anything approaching it, half a dozen men suggested a move in that direction.

"We can never reach it before night-fall," said Harry; "the clouds are heavy and the darkness will be great. Another suggestion, please."

The men knew that they could not travel in the darkness on account of the drifts and crevices, which they could see in the day-time and easily avoid.

Bill Grunt ventured to propose something.

"Make a fire," he said, "and camp here, cap'en."

"Make a fire with what?" asked Harry.

"Dere am a lilly timber here," said Ching-Ching, with a glance at Cutten's wooden leg.

"Oh! we could not burn that," said Harry, "but we must have warmth, or at least be sheltered from this biting blast. Here is a hollow. Now, if we run up a wall of snow to windward——"

"All right, cap'en!" cried the men.

"To work, then, my men, and you, Ching-Ching, make good use of your umbrella."

"Me bery pleased, Missa Harry."

Willing hands and arms gathered the snow, and Harry, Tom and Ira beat it into the shape of a semicircular wall. It was a poor shelter at the best, but it was better than none, and when the men gathered behind it they declared themselves to be quite snug and comfortable.

They made the place still more retired by sticking up their snow-shoes in front and making a sort of fence, about a foot and a half high—of no utility whatever, except to lend a little to the idea of being in an inclosure.

This was hardly done when darkness set in.

And such darkness!

So dense that their forms could be but dimly seen against the bank of snow. A fine prospect for the next sixteen hours or so lay before them.

Harry knew the advantages of eating and

drinking, and he desired them all to make a hearty meal.

Nothing loath, they out with their provisions and set to with a will, their tongues as busy as their teeth.

In the midst of the talking the voice of Bill Grunt was heard loudly demanding who had robbed him now.

"Silence there!" cried Harry. "Now, what is the matter, Grunt?"

"Somebody's got my bottle o' wine, sir," replied Bill.

"Ching-Ching," said Harry quietly.

"Yes, Missa Harry," replied that worthy from the far end of the circle.

"Have you got a bottle of wine to spare?"

"Me on'y got one ob my own, Missa Harry."

"Very true, but you may have a stray one or so."

"Dere sumfin like a bottle just in front ob me."

"That will do; send it on; and the next time a bottle strays in your direction, send it back to me."

"Yes, Missa Harry."

Bill Grunt recovered his liquor with the comment that "he was blessed if he knew how that chap got hold of it," and never took his hand off the neck of it until he had drained every drop. Then he lighted his pipe, and showed a tendency to become convivial.

"I've put up in many a wuss place than this, Eddard," he said, addressing himself to Cutten, "and I've sung many a song in a colder wind. You'd better keep quiet there."

"What's the matter?" asked Cutten.

"Fun is fun, and foolery is foolery," said Bill Grunt, "and there's times and seasons for everything, only never chuck snow-balls about in the dark. Do you sing, Eddard?"

"I had a voice once," replied Eddard, modestly, "but it ain't mellered with age, but if so be as the party around me is willin', why I'll do my best endeavors."

"The party," replied Bill Grunt, speaking for the whole, "is willin' enough. One or two may hold out, but go on, Eddard."

Cutten cleared his throat for the charming ditty of "Nancy Green," but ere he could pipe a note the voice of Samson broke in—

"Massa Harry," he said.

"I knowed it," cried the boatswain; "but don't mind 'em. Go on, Eddard."

"Silence, there," cried Harry, who knew by the tone of Samson's voice that it was no common interruption. "What is it, Samson?"

"I hear sumfin, Massa Harry. All be quiet, please."

"Quiet, all."

There were rebellious feelings in the breasts of Bill and Eddard, but the voice of authority was not to be disputed, and they became as quiet as the rest.

Samson went out of the inclosure, and standing erect listened. In a few seconds he was convinced that he had not been mistaken.

"I hear 'em now, Massa Harry," he said.

"What are they?"

"Wolves, Massa Harry," and while he yet spoke the snarling and growling of the pack reached the group of startled men.

"Yes, Massa Harry."

"How many wolves would you think there were?"

"'Bout two hundred, Massa Harry."

"I never heard of such a pack, Samson."

"Dere one, two, tree, many packs, Massa Harry, come all way at once."

"I thought so," muttered Harry.

"They are the most unmusical lot I ever listened to," remarked Ira.

"I reckon dat dis no illy joke," said Ching-Ching seriously; and when he was serious, matters were momentous.

Nearer and nearer came the pack, halting occasionally to howl and shriek like demons.

Pack answered pack, and the air rang with their cries.

"Missa Grunt," said Ching-Ching, stealing softly up to his enemy, "gib me your lilly hand."

"Wot for?" demanded Bill.

"Much berrer die friends dan enemies. It may be dat de wolves pick my bones and yourn. Den we nebber quarrel no more."

Bill Grunt hesitated and strove to make conditions.

"I'll give you my hand, mister," he said, "if you'll promise me never to come any of your games agen, if you get out of this hole."

"Missa Grunt," replied Ching-Ching earnestly, "I gib you dat promise in a moment, if I tink det dere was any chance ob my keeping it. But I only a poor, weak Chinaman, and when you ask me not for to joke, you ask de cock not to crow and de swallow not to fly. No, Missa Grunt, I cannot gib dat promise."

"You've turned unto the truth at last," said Bill. "I respects you for your manly way of putting it. Here's my hand. Eddard, give him yours."

Eddard, who was of a more cantankerous disposition, did not respond with that promptitude which so well becomes a man, but after a moment's delay he wiped his palm upon his thigh and held it out. Ching-Ching gave each a warm grip, and Samson followed suit.

"There's one thing you might do, Mr. Ching-Ching," said Bill, "and that is, try to let us alone."

"Oh, yes; I'll try," replied Ching-Ching

CHAPTER VII.

ENEMY UPON ENEMY.

Under ordinary circumstances neither Harry nor his men would have been much troubled by the arrival of such a foe, but the little body of men were placed in a peculiar position, with its special disadvantages.

They were but poorly sheltered, in the first place.

In the second, they had no fire to ward off the foe.

And, thirdly, the darkness was intense.

Nocturnal beasts have, as Harry knew, peculiar gifts of vision, and although both he and his men might have great difficulty in making out by night the presence of the enemy, the fierce and ravenous brutes would have no difficulty in distinguishing them.

The odds were against the Belvederes.

"This is a new kind of warfare," he said to Ira, "and I scarcely know how to deal with the enemy."

"They are coming swiftly on," said Ira.

"Oh, their instinct is unerring," returned Harry, "but there is no position without a possible escape. Samson."

readily. That promise he could very conscientiously give.

Nearer and nearer came the horrible cry of the howling pack.

"I see no chance for us," said Harry. "We can blaze away into the thick of them, and probably cut a few to pieces, but such creatures will not be stayed by the death of one or two comrades."

His raised voice secured the attention of every ear, and he went on.

"Comrades," he said, "the dismal end of our adventurous lives may be at hand. There is little honor and glory in it. No clash of arms, no martial music, no booming cannon, but simply a fight with savage brutes, who will devour our very bones and leave no record of their work. Our comrades will wonder, strangers will wonder—perhaps the world will wonder—what has been our fate, for the Belvedere has made its name; but let us not shrink, e'en though we die alone and unheeded. Stand firm, back to back, and fight while you have a spark of life in your bodies."

"Hurrah!" cried the men, and their shout was answered by a chorus of howls.

Each man stood with cutlass drawn and pistol in his left hand, the latter to be fired and thrown away, the former only to be parted with in death.

The howls of the brutes were plain enough now, and Samson fancied that he could see the foremost stealing up. The wolves were approaching cautiously, until quite certain of the position of their expected prey.

But while the hero of the Belvedere and his men stood listening, other sounds came to them.

Human voices!

There were not many—two at the outside—but the sounds they sent forth were so piercing and heartrending that even Harry grew chill.

Struggling sounds and fierce grunts followed for a while, and then came the wrangling of beasts over their prize.

"Whoever they be," said Harry, doffing his cap, "heaven have mercy on them."

"Amen," responded the men.

"Stand fast," cried Ira; "here they come."

As he uttered the words the foremost leaped up and received the contents of Ira's

pistol in his breast. He fell back howling, and rolled upon the snow.

But his anguish was but brief. All is fish that comes to the net of the wolf, and those immediately behind the wounded brute sprang upon and tore it to pieces.

"Back," said Harry as he witnessed the dim struggling and wrangling forms—"back, step by step. We may be saved yet. Wolf food is good enough for wolves. Pass me a rifle."

These, the most important weapons our friends had with them, had been in the first instance abandoned, and for this reason—they required two hands to fire, and when discharged would be of very little use; but a pistol could be promptly fired off, and the cutlass at the same time kept ready for use.

But Harry had now other tactics in view.

"Give me a rifle," he said again.

They passed him one; he rapidly examined it, took aim at a shadowy form and pulled the trigger.

A howl of anguish came back, followed by the wrangling and snarling as before. Full fifty wolves had arrived upon the ground, and the others were fast coming up.

"Another rifle!" cried Harry. "Tom and Ira, take one each and fire into their midst."

Bang—bang—bang! The three rifles were emptied and passed to the rear to be reloaded, while the starving wolves devoured their friends, little caring how or where they got the food or what that food was, so long as it was flesh and blood.

"Help! murder!" bawled Cutten in the rear.

"It's only a bear, Missa Harry," said Ching-Ching cheerfully, "me soon settle him."

He stepped out and disappeared in the gloom, the great hulking shadow following him.

"Stop, Chingy," roared Samson.

"No; keep dere," answered our friend; "me come back soon."

The confusion on the other side was now terrific; the three marksmen had brought down at least half a score of the enemy, and the rioting over their carcasses was hellish.

The Belvedere men had been in some rough scenes, and had heard awful sounds before, but never aught like this.

"As their appetites diminish their pluck gone, lengthening out the dismal hours ten-will decrease," said Harry. "One round fold more, and then pause a while."

When this was done, Harry and his followers awaited the result.

Our hero had not mistaken the nature of the brutes he was dealing with.

Their courage was only the stimulus of hunger. A little flesh and blood having taken off the keen edge, they were no longer recklessly brave.

But they did not take themselves off, "which was neither polite nor grateful," as Ira said. Snarling and growling, they kept running about at a tolerably safe distance.

"And that gives us the promise of a very pleasant night," said Harry.

"Chingy, Chingy!" roared Samson in the rear.

"Something up there," said Tom.

"Oh, Massa Harry, poor Chingy's gone."

"He's allus gone, and he's never gone," said Bill Grunt.

But it really seemed as if it was all over with our friend at last.

They bawled his name again and again and no answer came back but the sighing of the wind and the snarling of the wolves.

Poor Ching-Ching.

"None but a hass would ha' gone arter a bear in the dark," said Bill Grunt, who, as soon as his enemy was in tribulation, forgot and forgave everything, "it is like his mad tricks."

They shouted again, but all to no purpose; no answer came back.

We cannot stay to fully describe the horrors of that night upon the snowy plain; thrice did the wolves renew the attack, and thrice did they pause to feed upon their brethren, slain by the unerring rifles.

No man slept a wink or sought to take rest; all they did was to drink the little wine that was left to them, and they had need of it.

It was the longest night any of them had ever known.

In an ordinary sense it was of immense duration, covering nearly nineteen hours, seventeen of which were of profound darkness, but the moments drawled away as they always do when we wish a time to be past or

Deprived of their shelter and exposed to the keen blast, the adventurers, one and all, were taxed to their utmost, and had they possessed constitutions one degree less injured to hardships they would all have died that night upon the desolate plain.

There was grief, too, felt for Ching-Ching, for he had long been the life and soul of the Belvedere, and as the weary watchers thought of him many of them whispered in their hearts that they could, perhaps, have better spared a better man.

"Take him for all in all, we shall never look upon his like again," said Tom. "I had no idea that the villain had so strong a hold upon me."

"If ever I grow rich and great I will put up a monument to him," said Harry; "he deserves to be immortalized."

"No monnymment do justice to poor ole Chingy," gasped Samson, speaking the sentiments of his heart.

All mourned him as dead, for it truly seemed that escape was impossible; alone he had set out and been lost in the darkness; alone he had, as it were, thrown himself into the jaws of a wild beast.

To add to the general misery, sleet began to fall—a cold, cutting sleet—which became ice as soon as it touched the earth.

Icicles gathered on the clothes of the men and upon their weapons, and it was only by rubbing their faces that they could keep them free from the chilly ornaments.

The sleet brought one blessing with it, however—it drove away the wolves, who went off howling to the woods.

It was a strange and wondrous night, for in the midst of the bitter sleet it began to lightning and thunder, the latter booming and echoing with a strange and solemn significance, which awed the listeners and sobered the most thoughtless among them.

What would they have given to be back on the board the Belvedere.

They thought of their cozy berths under the hatches, and sighed. In their hearts they thought that they would never see that dear old craft again.

All endured bravely. No man flinched or meanly blamed the captain or his cause.

They had entered his service to follow him whithersoever he led them, and they were content.

The time dragged so that some began to think that the day of the world was spent and eternal night had come.

"The sun has left us," murmured one, and a shudder ran throughout.

But the dawn came at last, feebly creeping through the inky clouds.

It revealed an icy plain, the scattered bones of the wolves, a few rags blown about by the wind, the frozen lake, and no more.

As one of the rags whirled by, Harry picked it up and recognized a portion of the Russian's coat; so it was he and his wife, who followed his track, had perished.

He could not tell whether they had pursued him in their desolation for the sake of being near some fellow-beings or for the purpose of working him ill.

In either case they had both perished, and all that was left of the scheming and plotting man and woman—alive a few hours before—was a rag or two fluttering in the wind.

"I see nothing of poor Chingy, Massa Harry," said poor, disconsolate Samson. "Oh, where am he?"

He turned away, and Samson mournfully fell into the rear.

Harry consulted the chart he carried, and discovered that he could cut off a portion of the road by traveling over the lake.

He gave the word to change the snowshoes for skates, and when this was done they set out upon the new mode of travel.

Old Cutter, being only able to carry one skate, was driven to the expedient of "grasshopping," that is, he kept one leg down and propelled himself forward with the other. But he got on fairly.

The men tumbled about at first, but in half an hour they were all going rapidly forward with a friendly wind behind them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HUT ON THE LAKE.

The lake on which the wanderers now were seemed to be of vast extent, but as they

proceeded along they discovered small islands rising here and there, with stunted bushes, so hard and cold that they might have been modeled out of iron.

But they were wood, and many a longing eye was cast upon them, and several tongues ventured to speak about a fire.

Harry, however, refused to halt until they came in sight of an island almost two hundred yards in width, in the centre of which was a long wooden hut.

This appeared to be a sort of fishing station for summer use, but it was now deserted, and the door fastened by a rough kind of lock.

Private property ought at all times to be respected, but neither Harry nor his men were in the humor to stand upon ceremony, and this lock was speedily knocked off and the door opened.

The interior was not very inviting as houses go, but it was a haven of rest for the tired men, who were almost mad with delight when they found a good stock of wood in the corner.

A fire was rapidly set going, and they crowded round the welcome blaze.

Harry, however, stood apart talking with Samson for a few minutes, and then he advanced to their midst and said:

"I cannot yet give up our friend Ching-Ching. I am going with Samson in search of him. Keep the fire roaring, as it will serve to guide us back, both night and day."

In a moment every man was upon his feet.

"Not alone, cap'en," was the general cry.

"Well spoken," cried Harry cheerily. "So shall it be. Let us divide into parties, and search in every point of the compass; but one must remain to take care of the fire."

It was only natural that Cutten should be appointed to the post, for he was the least fit to travel.

The last bit of "grasshopping" had tried his live leg sorely, and he was, to use his own expression, "quite doubled up."

He expressed himself willing to remain, and the men, being divided, went off under the command of Harry, Tom, Ira and Bill Grunt, Samson accompanying our hero.

Cutten stood by the door and bade them farewell.

It was not until they were nearly out of

sight that it occurred to him that he was taken a man of more than common nerve to alone, and a most uncomfortable sensation sit in peace within that hut.

ran over his frame from head to heel.

Alone—it certainly was a very trying feeling, the whole place was so desolate—so dismal—so cheerless in spite of the fire.

"I wish the cap'en hadn't pitched upon me," he muttered as he closed the door, "but it all comes o' havin' a wooden leg. I ought to ha' stopped on board the Belvedere. Well, they are all gone and I am here; but—but—suppose none of 'em ever come back?"

This terrible thought lifted the little hair time had left to him, and the terror in nowise diminished when he discovered that they had taken all the ammunition with them—not a single charge of powder and shot remained in his pouch.

He thought of the wolves, and wondered what he should do if they made a day attack upon him. He had his cutlass, but what was the use of that? He might get one chop at them, and then—

"Oh, bother it," he muttered, "I wish I'd gone with 'em."

He next thought that he would barricade the door, but this could not be done very effectually, as the wood was in the form of faggots, and there was no inside bolt, but any barricade was better than none, and he piled up a lot of faggots against the door.

"I can tell 'em I did it to keep the draught out," he thought.

Cutten was a man of luminous ideas, and this was particularly brilliant; he might as well have talked of stopping a stream with a fork.

There was a window in the hut, but it was covered with a shutter which had a hole in it, through which the old man could command a view of the landscape.

The first time he took a peep at it he could just see his comrades in the distance; when he looked again they were gone.

He made up the fire and sat down with face to the door.

Untold wealth would not have tempted him to sit with his back to it, for he had a presentiment that sooner or later something would come into the hut and bring dismay or death upon him.

A little nervousness under the circumstances was excusable, for it would have

Cutten had only the general amount of pluck, and his sufferings were prodigious.

The day waned away, and no signs of his comrades' return.

The hole in the shutter changed from a white eye to a black one, and Cutten, from being a peeper within, felt that he was being looked at from without.

This, strange as it may seem, made his loneliness more terrible to him, and fear made his body quiver like guava jelly.

His comrades!

Where were they?

Had they deserted him or were they dead! In either case, what was he to do?

He was turning these thoughts over in his head for the hundredth time, when a rustling sound, like something lightly scraping against the wall outside, fell upon his terrified ear.

A strange sound it was, as if some beast was easing a trifling irritation, after the manner of beasts in general.

It ceased, and then—

"Oh! horrors of horrors!"

There was really an eye at the hole in the shutter!

Again the rustling sound, and then some heavy weight fell against the door.

His feeble barricade tottered and fell.

"Marcy! marcy!" gasped the unfortunate Eddard.

All his thoughts were concentrated on the door.

It opened slowly.

Creaking and groaning, it opened about three feet, and a head was thrust in.

The head of a bear.

"Marcy!" gasped Cutten again, and rolled over upon his face.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEARCH AND ITS RESULT.

Harry regretted the loss of time which the search for Ching-Ching involved, but he felt that it was nothing more than a duty he owed to the strange being who had so

often helped to lighten the daily lives of the men of the Belvedere.

He felt, moreover, that if he had not set out, that Samson would have undertaken the task alone, and it was more than probable that many of the men would have keenly felt the loss of their well-established favorite.

So, putting everything together, the search was imperative, and he bowed himself to his fate.

"There may be a significance in all these delays," he thought, as he moved along, "a significance which I cannot understand. Or it may be that they are nothing more than the common obstacles of life, which it is our bounden duty to overcome."

He tried to persuade himself that it was the latter, but there was ever something within which prompted him to abandon the pursuit, and turn back.

The words of Shakespeare, which he involuntarily altered to suit his case, were ever in his ears:

"Leave him to heaven, and to those thorns
Which in his bosom lodge, to prick and sting
him."

But he held on, resolved to let naught keep him back until he either accomplished his set purpose, or perished in the attempt.

It was monotonous work, skating over the ice, although the motion was free, and in a sense exhilarating.

But the pleasure, such as it was, was more than counterbalanced by the dismal surroundings.

There were with him Samson and two of the men.

Samson kept on by his side, while the men lingered a pace or two behind.

A few words exchanged by the men were overheard by our hero.

"I'm blessed," said one, "if this ain't rum work."

"I never reckoned on it when I j'ined the Belvedere," replied the other.

"Nor I either. But the cap'en is a rum chap."

"There never was a rummer," said the other. "But here's with him wheresoever he may go."

"That's the tip," replied the previous to the left.

speaker, launching out with a little additional vigor.

"I have no right to risk the lives of such men as these," thought Harry. "We are but two days from Tichsin. I will go there, and if I find not Brocken, will turn back and give up the pursuit."

"Massa Harry," said Samson, "I see a lilly speck ober dere."

They pulled up sharply, the Jack tars adopting the simple expedient of sitting suddenly down, and looked in the direction pointed out by Samson.

At first Harry could see nothing, but as Samson made the position of the object clearer, our hero did at length perceive a dot upon the ice.

It was a mere speck, and might have been a post, or bush, or bird, or anything, in fact.

It did not appear to be more than a mile away.

"I do not think it is Ching-Ching," said Harry. "It is too small."

"It bigger dan Ching-Ching," returned Samson, positively.

"Oh, no; it is very near us."

"No, Massa Harry, it much further away dan it look."

"Very well, Samson, we will be guided by you; but do not take us out of the track oftener than you can possibly help."

"Massa Harry! keep you in de track? Oh, golly!"

"What is the matter?"

Samson was stooping down, eagerly gazing at the ice.

"Man track and bear track," he said. "Look dere, Massa Harry."

Harry shook his head.

He could see nothing but the surface of the lake, thinly covered with drift and frozen snow.

"Dere was track here," said Samson, "and de snow come and cober him a lilly up. But de track dere, Massa Harry. Me find Ching-Ching."

He was a changed man in a moment, and drawing up his majestic form, drew a deep breath.

Then, with his eyes upon the ice, he moved forward in the direction of the speck.

Soon, however, he turned aside and moved

to the left.

Harry drew his attention to the fact.

"It is all right, Massa Harry," he said; "I am on ole Chingy's trail."

Ching-Ching's trail seemed to be of a corkscrew fashion, for it wound about in the most extraordinary fashion, as if that gentleman had been engaged in mapping out a maze; but in the end it bore straight down upon the speck in the distance.

As they drew near they saw that it was neither a stump nor a bush, but looked rather like a dark sack—a sweep's sack, for instance.

It was unlike anything they had ever seen before.

A little further on they could see there were two objects lying one above the other.

Samson declared that one was an animal and the other a human being.

"It poor ole Chingy—dead!" he cried; and Harry feared so, too.

At length they came near enough to perceive that it was indeed Ching-Ching lying across a big brown bear.

Both were dead, evidently, after a mortal struggle, as the ice around was covered with blood.

"Oh! poor old lubly Chingy," cried Samson, rushing forward and throwing himself upon the dead body of his friend.

To his astonishment and almost terror, the defunct one opened his eyes and struggled into a sitting position.

"Hallo!" he said, "what de time, eh? What all dis about?"

He stared about him in surprise, but he quickly realized the position.

"Oh, I see," he said; "I hab overslept myself!"

Which was indeed the fact.

In a few words he told his story.

He had followed the bear until he got a good opportunity, and then he had quietly stabbed it, and, with the object of preserving as much good food for general consumption, sat upon it, hoping, when daylight came again, to find his comrades.

"But suppose we had all been devoured by the wolves?"

"No fear ob dat," returned Ching-Ching; "so me sit down to tink a lilly bit, and den my eyes close up, and me wake no more until Sammy fall ober me."

Samson explained that his prostration arose from sentiments of a friendly nature, and Ching-Ching expressed himself much gratified.

A return was proposed, but Harry remembered that they had no food, and the whole of them set about cutting the dead bear into portions.

"We can remove the skin when we get back," said Harry.

Ching-Ching took charge of the head, fixing it upon his cutlass, and heading the procession.

Darkness almost immediately set in.

The fire in the hut now proved to be of good service, for the column of light streaming through the hole in the roof, which did duty as a beacon, guided them on their way.

Without any mishap they reached the hut, and they were about to enter, when Ching-Ching begged, as a particular favor, that he might be the first to show.

How he did our readers are pretty well aware of.

Feeling along the hut, he halted first by the shutter, and peeped through the hole.

It was his eye that Cutten saw.

Then he pushed open the door, and thrust in the bear's head, growling terrifically.

He expected to hear the mariner cry out for mercy, but that unfortunate individual uttered no sound.

He had fainted.

CHAPTER X.

THAT VILLAIN CHING-CHING.

"I hope that nothing serious will come of this," said Harry, as he held Cutten's head upon his arm; "really, Ching-Ching, you are too bad sometimes."

"Massa Harry, I berry sorry," returned Ching-Ching, fervently. "Me tink dat him not hurt; he open him lilly eye."

"Help," roared old Cutten, "save me. Oh! sir, I'm very sorry; I thought a bear was there."

"Here am de head ob one," replied Ching-Ching.

"So you've come back," said the old man;

"well I ain't sorry. Who cut that head off?"

"Me did," replied Ching-Ching, which was strictly true.

Old Cutten rose upon his foot and grasped his one-time enemy by the hand.

"My benefactor and my friend," he said, in a voice which the penny-a-liners call "broken by emotion."

It was a mistake on both sides, but Ching-Ching immediately took advantage of it.

"You berry welcome," he said; "me do de same t'ing again, if it any good to you."

"Would you now?" asked old Cutten.

"Dat I would," said Ching-Ching.

Cutten gave him another hearty shake and brushed away a tear.

"You're a man," he said, "and I respects you."

Samson grinned like two people. Harry turned away to hide a smile, and the men exchanged a wink, but none gave even a hint as to the real state of the case.

As for Ching-Ching, he put on an air which plainly said, "I have saved your life, but do not think much of performing such trifles; pray say no more about it."

"He was a big 'un," said old Cutten, contemplating the head of the bear, "and I am free for to confess that I worn't ready to face him; but p'r'aps you are used to it."

"Pretty well," said Ching-Ching.

"May I be so bold," returned old Cutten, overcome with gratitude, "as to ax for another shake of the fist?"

Ching-Ching smiled and extended his paw. "Eddard" took it tenderly and pressed it.

"If ever you wants a friend," he said, "come to me."

"I will."

Footsteps outside cut short this interchange of good will, and Tom and his men came in. The others shortly followed, and a general handshaking with Ching-Ching ensued.

"We tried to pot a bear," said Tom, "and failed. Somebody, however, appears to have been more fortunate."

"Cutten, can you tell the whole story?" said Harry.

"Aye, that I can," said Cutten, "which I freely does to one and all."

"Spin it short," cried Ira, "for we are all hungry."

"I was sittin' afore this fire," said Cutten, "a-wonderin' what I could do to make you all comfortable when you came back, and thinking what a bad thing it was that you hadn't left me no powder and shot, for to be sure I should ha' gone out in search o' something."

"I was sittin' so, I say, when I hears a scratching and a growling outside, and knowed as how a bear was there."

"So I looks about me for a weapon, but afore I could lay hold o' one, in comes this 'ere brute and knocks me down so that I becomes insensible."

"I thought it were all up with me——"

"When you was insensible?" interrupted Ching-Ching, who had taken up a position by his side.

"Yes," continued Cutten, "and then I remembered no more until I wakes up and finds our gallant cap'en a-holding my head and Ching-Ching chopping the bear up; to whom I owes my gratitood, and for whom I now calls for three cheers."

The cheers were given, and Ching-Ching in a neat speech acknowledged the honor.

He then elected himself to the post of cook, and pressing into his service two or three men, proceeded to cut up the bear.

Ching-Ching's cooking was, like himself, peculiar.

Opening out the middle of the fire so as to expose a mass of red-hot wood, he tossed in the bear-steaks, turned them over two or three times with the point of his cutlass, and then handed them out, serving the officers first.

The steaks were tried and declared to be perfection.

Plates there were none, of course, but it was not the time or place for delicate eating, and every man shifted as best he could.

"I shall serve my friend Cutten last," said Ching-Ching, "so dat we seal de new bond ob friendship ober our dinner. Sammy, you wait for us, and make quite a friendly party ob it."

"May I be so bold as to jine?" said Bill Grunt; "a kindness done to Eddard is a kindness done to me."

"We berry pleased to conclude you," said Ching-Ching.

By this time there was a deal of whispering and chuckling going round.

The two men who had been of Harry's party were circulating the true story, but the victim, Cutten, was quite unconscious of everything except that henceforth he was bound to that brave and noble Chinaman.

His turn came at last for a steak, and the one Ching-Ching handed to him was, either by accident or design, about half the size of the rest; but he made no demur, and accepted it with every appearance of lively joy.

This was too much for the men, who knew that under ordinary circumstances "Eddard" was the man to look after number one and was at all times ready to resist any curtailment of his rights.

And a roar of laughter rang through the hut.

"What's the matter?" asked Bill Grunt, looking round suspiciously.

"Some lilly joke against you, I speck," said Ching-Ching.

"Ain't it one of yourn?"

"Oh, no! Massa Grunt; me play no jokes on you."

Another roar of laughter, in which Cutten, without knowing why or wherefore, joined.

He had an idea that something was going against Bill Grunt, and it tickled him immensely.

"I'd like to know the meaning o' all this," said Bill, feeling about his back, strongly suspecting that he was ticketed in some way.

"Massa Grunt," said Ching-Ching, "dere no joke against you."

"Oh, no, Bill," added Cutten, shaking his head waggishly. "There's no joke against you. Oh, no!"

Again the men laughed, and Bill Grunt's eyes flashed angrily.

He was certain that something to his detriment had been done, or was going to be done.

"It's summat afloat," he muttered, turning over his meat suspiciously.

"Dere no jokes in de meat," said Ching-Ching; "me nebber play tricks when me do de cooking."

"Oh, no!" said Cutten; "there's no joke in the bear."

This was too much, and the men fairly shrieked, some of them rolling over in their intense amusement.

"Eddard," said Bill Grunt, rising, "I'll know the meaning o' this."

"The meaning o' what?" asked Cutten, putting on an innocent air.

"Oh, you know, Eddard."

"No, I don't."

"Eddard, you're a liar."

"William," said old Cutten, solemn and stiff in a moment, "them words are serus."

The bare fact of calling the boatswain by the name of William instead of the familiar Bill was sufficient to show that a real breach had been established.

Grunt accepted the position and merely said:

"They was meant to be so."

"Oh, come, don't quarrel," said Tom. "Grunt, come here a moment and I will tell you what it all means."

Bill Grunt retired with him to a corner of the hut, and in a few seconds came back holding his sides with laughter.

"Oh! it is wery good—wery good indeed," he cried. "Eddard, what a hass you are."

It was Cutten's turn to be mystified, and he was truly puzzled. Looking round the group, he sought enlightenment, but found none; as a last resource he appealed to his new friend:

"Mister Ching-Ching," he said, "what's it all about?"

"How should me know?" replied Ching-Ching, innocently.

"Can you tell me, Mister Samson?"

"If Ching-Ching not know how should a poor nigger tell you?"

"Go on with your wittles, Eddard," said Bill Grunt, cutting away at his own in a sort of ecstasy. "Oh! what a hass you are."

"William," said Cutten, softly, "you was once my friend."

"That's all over," replied Bill. "Go on with your wittles; you ought to enj'y that bear. Ha! ha!—ho! ho! I shall bust."

"He's gone lunatick," said Cutten, scornfully. "I blushes for you, William."

"Blush away!" cried Bill, "and be wery thankful to Mister Ching-Ching that you are here to blush. Ha! ha!"

"So I am," said old Cutten, warmly. "I

should be less than a man if I forgot what I owe to him."

"De least said 'bout that de berrer I like it," said Ching-Ching, modestly.

"He'll be the death o' me," cried the boat-swain. "Oh, Eddard!"

"Don't take liberties with my name," returned Cutten; "I'm generally called Mister Cutten by strangers."

"All right," said Bill, and went on with his meal.

Cutten, with the very uncomfortable sensation of being made a fool of, without knowing how or by whom, turned his attention to his steak, and Ching-Ching proceeded to cook more for such as had need of them.

By dint of hard thinking, Cutten, in about half an hour, arrived at a slight suspicion of the truth.

The men were all smoking and spinning yarns, or listening.

Bill Grunt was one of the listeners to a narrative of a very wonderful capture of a whale, when he felt a hand upon his arm, and turning, beheld Cutten.

"What is it, Bill? Tell me."

"Why do you bother me, Eddard? You insulted me, and said I was a stranger."

"Bill, you are my best friend; what is the joke?"

"Why, it is nothing more than that the Chinees have made a hass of you as usual."

And then he told him all, and "Eddard Cutten" retired into a shady corner, where he growled and groaned himself to sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

TICH SIN.

"Tichsin," says the geographer, "is a town in Great Russia, in the Government of Novgorod, one hundred and sixty-eight miles east-southeast of St. Petersburg. It stands in the Tichsin Sea, which, together with a canal of the same name, connects the town with the Baltic. The inhabitants are chiefly employed in the transit trade by land and water. Population, six thousand one hundred and forty-eight."

We thus perceive that the town our hero was bound for was a place of some importance, for a gathering of six thousand people in thinly populated Russia took the form of a large community.

Their trade was, as we see, one of transit, which was mostly carried on in the summer. In the winter the people lived, or rather slept, upon the proceeds.

The Russians are stiff drinkers, and patronize their cabarets extensively, but they do everything in a quiet, orderly manner.

When they enter a tavern they go straight to work, until they have had as much as their purses will allow, or have stupefied their somewhat heavy intellects, and in either case they retire to a corner, from whence, if sober, they silently watch others drink, or if well sodden, fall asleep.

We must now beg our readers to enter one of these cabarets or taverns at Tichsin, where we shall find one personage at least with whom we are tolerably familiar.

It is not an inviting place, for it belongs to the low order of drinking houses, and the frequenters are the poorest class of boors and serfs.

Its counter is made of rough planks, behind which a burly Moscovite and his wife stand to attend upon their customers; the drinks are kept in tubs and bottles; there are no taps or engines, the only seats are empty barrels, and the light comes from the coarsest of oil lamps.

A frowsy place—a dirty, dismal cellar, enough to frighten away all but the most determined votaries of Bacchus or those who want a place to hide and skulk away in.

"A glass of brandy, good Gortska," cried a man, entering and tossing a coin upon the counter.

Several half-satisfied bankrupt Bacchanalians looked with hungry eyes at the drink as he raised the coarse poison to his lips and drank it off with gusto.

"Good stuff," said Gortska.

The customer nodded and put down another coin.

"Serve him, Ninette," said the host; "I must go and see to our lodger."

Gortska left the bar, and crossing the kitchen in the rear, passed out of the back door.

This brought him to an open yard with a lot of ramshackle buildings standing almost like drunken men.

One on the left side was taller than the rest, and its upper story was reached by means of a wooden ladder outside.

Ascending the ladder, Gortska tapped lightly at the door, which opened cautiously and disclosed that all was dark within.

"Who's there?"

"Gortska."

"Come in."

The host entered and closed the door.

The man who had let him in removed a measure which he had put over a burning lamp.

It was almost extinguished, but it burned up again quickly, revealing the form of a tall man with a swarthy face, and his body wrapped in furs.

"You conceal light and fire well," said Gortska, in English.

The other laughed, and with a movement of his foot kicked down some boards; behind them was a closed stove throwing out light and ashes from the bottom.

"I scarcely know why I do so," said the man.

"Of course not," said Gortska, coolly.

"It is a passing fancy of mine—nothing more."

"My friend," replied the host, "why lie to me. I have no desire to do you harm. I have no love for the police."

"I tell you," said the other, "that I have no reason to hide from the police."

"Then why hide at all?"

"Because I am pursued by a foe."

"He must be a foe indeed, to hunt you to such a place as this."

"He has driven me almost from pole to pole," said the swarthy one, in whom we may as well reveal Captain Brocken, "and for certain reasons I dare not face him."

"And yet you must be a bold man to sleep here."

"Why?"

"Hear you nothing in the night?" asked the host Gortska.

"I am disturbed by dreams," replied Brocken; "but that is nothing new. Go where I may, I am haunted by shadows."

"So!" said the host; "but tell me what you hear here."

"The trampling of feet—sounds of struggling—and cries for mercy," replied the pirate; "and then come fiendish laughter."

"Aye, aye," muttered Gortska, looking about him nervously.

"But all these are my dreams," said Brocken.

"You think so," answered the host. "Well, you must have done good work to dream so well."

"I have done that which can never have forgiveness," muttered the pirate. "I have shed enough blood to tinge the sea forever with a ghastly hue. Old and young, the fair and the uncomely, have alike fallen before me, and for what? To gratify the deadly lusts of my tempest-burdened soul."

"It seems to me," whispered Gortska, drawing near to him, "that we are well met. You think that the noises you hear are the fancies of your brain. They are not."

"What say you?" cried the pirate.

"Those cries are but a repetition of the past," pursued the host, the veins of his forehead swelling under the emotions excited by his memory. "Many a good man, and many a bad man—many an exile, and many a traveler, has slept his last sleep there, and I have put him to rest."

"You, a cowardly murderer?"

"And what are you?" demanded Gortska. "Pirate and knave by your own confession. Was it brave to slay the young? Was it brave to consign the fair to an awful doom?"

"No more, no more."

"Are we not, then, well met?"

"Aye, so it is," muttered Brocken.

"Your hand, comrade," cried Gortska.

The other paused a moment, and then held out his palm. Gortska grasped it, and was about to say more, when voices outside startled them both.

"Hush," said the host; "I hear Ninette speaking."

"We have no resting-place but these out-houses," she was saying, "and that loft is full of hay. You had better press on."

"Any shelter is better than none," replied a youthful voice; "my men are used to roughing it. We can light a fire, and make ourselves comfortable."

"Who can they be?" asked Gortska.

He turned to his companion, who was standing in an attitude of fixed horror and terror, with his eyes upon the door.

"He here," he hissed—"here on this spot! Then all is indeed lost—the hand of Heaven is against me, and I am doomed."

"Who are they?" asked Gortska.

"I know and feel that my time is at hand," continued the pirate, not heeding him. "Thrice have I dreamed of his coming, thrice have I heard his voice, crying: 'I come,' and he is here. Aye, ye fiends, that grin and chatter at me out of the darkness, ye will not have long to wait. The fruit is ripe, and will soon fall."

"Be a man," said Gortska; "you may escape them yet."

"I have been more than a man," replied the other, "and I could act the man still with a common foe, but you know not who haunts me, or why I fly from him."

"I want no man's secrets," said the host.

"You will not have mine," replied Brocken. "Hark! he speaks again. Listen to the music in young Harry's voice."

He knelt down by the door with hands tightly clasped, and listened while Harry gave out a few commands. Then he arose and paced up and down in an agitated manner.

"I must leave you now," said Gortska; "cover your light and let me go forth."

The pirate did not heed him, so he covered the lamp and stove himself, and opening the door, softly went out, and closed it behind him.

A number of men were moving below, some of them bearing torches, while others were dragging out fagots to make a fire.

"They make themselves at home," muttered Gortska.

Then descending, he singled out their leader, and addressed him in soft and insinuating tones.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TICHŠIN POLICE.

"My house," said Gortska, "is too small for so many guests, but you are welcome."

Harry and Tom turned, and took stock of him in the best way the light afforded. The latter spoke:

"Who are you?" he said.

"Gortska, at your service."

"And who may Gortska be when he is at home?"

"He is the host of this cabaret, sir."

"Oh, indeed," said Harry; "you are the man I want."

"I am all attention, English sir."

"Have you had any strangers this way of late?"

"Some have passed; but strangers are scarce here in the winter. The land is inhospitable and barren."

"So I have found it. I want to find a man with a dark skin, but European features, tall, commanding, and dressed in the costume of your country. Has he passed this way?"

"No," replied Gortska, and the next instant he could have bitten his tongue out for his folly. Had he said that Brocken had gone on, this Englishman and his men would doubtless have left the inn; but the words were spoken, and could not be recalled.

"What think you, Tom?" asked Harry, in a whisper.

"It is my opinion that he has perished in the snow."

"Aye, sir, he must have perished," broke in Gortska, eagerly; "no single man could have found his way hither."

They did not answer him, but continued to talk to each other in low tones. At length Harry turned and bade him prepare supper.

"Our fare," said the host, shrugging his shoulders, "is humble."

"It will suit men of our appetites," said Harry, in such a way that the host could not but consider the question settled.

The outhouse selected for occupation was a long shed with some rotten cattle-stalls in it, long disused. These the Jack Tars calmly broke up and prepared for the fire, which was soon blazing and roaring merrily in a corner.

Gortska brought in some benches, and indulged in a wry face when he saw what had been done; but when Harry tossed a gold coin upon the table in payment thereof, he was more than satisfied, and profuse in his acknowledgments.

"That loft of yours," said Harry, carelessly, "outside?"

"Aye, sir!"

"What is in it?"

"Hay for the cattle."

"Where do you keep your cattle?"

"Not mine, sir," replied Gortska, readily, "but for those who halt here."

"Indeed!" said Harry, and the Russian went away grinning. "You are cunning, my friend, but I may prove a match for you in the end."

"What can he know?" asked Tom.

"He knows everything," replied Harry, quietly. "Brocken is here—in the town, at least—and this man knows of his whereabouts. Did you see him look confused when he told us that no such person had arrived, and how eager he was to impress upon us that the villain had died by the way?"

"I noticed it, but thought nothing of it, Hal."

"There was much in it, Tom. If Brocken were not here he could know nothing of him; why, then should he get confused and eager in his cause? Supper is not yet ready. Let us call upon the agent of the police."

"I have his direction here," continued Harry, referring to the paper given him by the police agent at St. Petersburg; "and am assured that he is a mason."

"A mason—here?"

"Yes, Tom, masons are here, there, and everywhere. I will inquire of our host the way to go."

They entered the bar, where the landlord was engaged in a conference with his wife. When he heard whom they were seeking he turned deadly pale.

"I know nothing of the police," he began stammering, when Harry interrupted him.

"And I am not going to bring the police upon you," he said. "Where is the office?"

"At the corner of the next street," replied Gortska, apparently much relieved; but as soon as they had left the bar, he turned to his wife and groaned:

"Evil will come of this."

"Why did you harbor the accursed stranger, then?" she asked.

"I harbor him, Ninette! Did you not say to me——"

"Pshaw! that is like you men," said Ni-

nette; as soon as you get into trouble, you lay the blame upon a woman. It has been so from the fall downward. Be bold and brave, my Gortska; stand fast against them all. What have you done?"

"Harbored, I know not whom," he replied.

"And having harbored him, it were folly to betray him now," returned his wife; "it would not save you in any way—the police would show you no mercy. Confession to them brings no forgiveness. Stand at your post, and win or die like a man. The dark stranger has money, crisp English notes as good as gold, and he has promised us enough to keep us in our old days."

"True, true," muttered Gortska.

"I am tired of this life," continued his wife, "and I will not be foiled. Be this proud young Englishman whom he may, he shall not stand between us and our independence, let him have the police or not upon his side."

"The police are strong," said Gortska, doubtfully; "we know not their strength, in fact, or who or what is in their pay."

"Brandy here, good friend," said a voice close beside him, and the pair started. In their excitement, they had forgotten all but the subject they had in hand.

It was only a rude, half-sodden boor who asked for drink, and when they gave him the worth of the coin he had tossed upon the counter, he drank it up, and rolled into a corner, where he settled himself to sleep.

"It was lucky," said Gortska, "that we had no sharper wits near us."

"It was," said Ninette.

Meanwhile Harry and Tom, by the aid of some oil lamps slung across the street, had gained the office of the police, and on knocking, were admitted at once to a small room, where a man sat writing, and another stood warming his back by the fire.

The latter looked at our hero and his friend and made a sign to the man who was writing. He rose up, left the room, and closed the door.

"Welcome, brother," said the agent, as he shook hands with Harry. He then gave Tom the same greeting, and asked what service they required of him.

Harry, as briefly as possible, described the

man he was in search of, and gave his reasons for supposing that Brocken was in Tichsin.

"So far I agree with you," said the agent; "his horses and sledge were found in the street, not far from the cabaret."

"Then we have only to search the place——" began Harry, joyfully, when the agent interposed.

"Stay," he said; "by what power will you search?"

"Power!" cried Harry; "the power of right."

"That is not always enough; if it were, there would be no further need for police. Right would do their work."

"But the scoundrel has been a pirate."

"Just so."

"He has shed more blood, committed more murders, and dyed his soul in more atrocities than any twenty living men."

"Granted—but where is your proof?"

A look of dismay came upon Harry's face. He had no proof beyond his own convictions.

"Believe me," continued the agent, "you have been hasty in this way. You ought to have brought your evidence with you. I dare not interfere, in my official capacity, without evidence, as it might end in a journey to Siberia. And that," he added, with a shudder, "would be worse than death itself."

"But I'll not be foiled," cried Harry, passionately; "I will unearth the wolf, and challenge him hand to hand."

"Hush!" said the agent, holding up his hand; "I must not listen to this, in my official capacity, as it threatens a breach of the peace of Tichsin, and I am answerable for its peace. It is my duty not only to stop riots, but to prevent them. The czar expects it. Were you to attempt to search the place yourself, it would be my duty, in my official capacity, to stop you."

"Have you the power?"

"Ten times the power needed," replied the agent, calmly. "I can raise an armed force in five minutes."

"Foiled," said Harry, bitterly. "What, then, is to be done?"

"That I cannot tell you in my official capacity."

Harry caught at the latter phrase, so oft

repeated, and asked him if he could advise him in any other way.

"As a brother I could—at home," replied the agent.

"Can I see you there?"

"Come thither at midnight."

"Where do you live?"

"Leave the cabaret a little before that hour, and outside you will see a woman standing. Do not speak to her, but follow wherever she may lead."

"I thank you," said Harry, "and will obey you in all things."

"It is your only chance of success," was the agent's reply, and they shook hands and parted.

CHAPTER XIII. 94

THE AGENT'S ADVICE.

On their return to the inn, Harry and Tom found their followers indulging as usual in careless merriment, headed by Ching-Ching, over whom and Cutten the old animosity had resumed its sway.

"Afore I'd be a yaller Chinee," old Cutten was saying as they entered, "I'd be a wampire, or any warmint. There's nothing manly about 'em."

"Will you stand up and hab a lilly fight, Missa Cutten?" asked Ching-Ching, a little nettled by this reflection upon his manhood—"one lilly fight wif de fists."

"Go in at him," whispered Bill Grunt.

"I'll fight yer if yer stand fair and don't use yer feet," said old Cutten; "I've only got one leg to git about on, but I'll fight yer."

"Sammy," said Ching-Ching quietly, "tie my feet. I want none at all to fight dat ole scrubbin' brush."

"What's that, you busted Chinee?"

"Keep cool, Eddard," whispered Bill Grunt. "That's your only chance."

"All right, Bill; lay hold o' my coat."

"Shall I interfere?" asked Ira, as he joined our hero.

"No," said Harry, "let them have it out; neither of them will come to very much, I reckon."

"Tie 'em tighter," said Ching-Ching to Samson. "Nebber mind stoppin' de circu-

lation ob de blood. I get on berry well wif-out dat. Dis quarrel, genlymen," he added, addressing the admiring sailors, "bring back to my mind de last man dat I fight, when I was a lilly boy."

As old Cutten, probably not so very sanguine as to the result, was still, with the aid of his bosom friend, Bill, pursuing his preparations, one of the men asked Ching-Ching the story.

"I tell it," said that veracious gentleman, "so dat Missa Cutten know de sort ob party dat he going to run against, and if he hurt himself, it be berry unkind to blame me. Well, genlymen, I was a lilly boy dat used to go to school round de corner, where you all know de school was, and at dat corner dere was a man who kept a apple-shop, whar he sells sweets and gingy-beer. Sammy knows dat man."

"Eh, Chingy?" exclaimed Samson dryly.

"Oh, you know him bery well," said Ching-Ching, tenderly, "so don't go and leab me in de hour ob trubble, wif my feet tied, and a venomous ole man rolling up his shirt sleeves as if he got sumfin' to show in de way ob muscle—which he ain't, for he am de most flably ole man dat eber wore a wooden leg."

"We'll see about that," growled Cutten.

"Leabing dat venomous ole party for de present," continued Ching-Ching, "I will re-soom my story. De man dat Sammy know kep' de apple-shop was berry much like ole Cutten, only his face wasn't quite so much like de werminted pumpkin which my fader chuck away, because it wasn't good enuf for de pigs—but he had two legs, and was berry much stronger. Now I come to de fight—Sammy, be a friend and witness to de trufe."

"Me want to listen, Chingy."

"Yes, Sammy, and to confirm de obserwa-tions which fall like roses from my lips. Dis venomous ole party—who de more I tink of, de more I see de likeness atween him and ole Cutten, only he didn't turn white when him going to fight—dis venomous ole party objected to my looking in him shop-windy. 'You git away,' he say, 'you nebber buy nuf-fin, and I've allus to clean the windy arter you've rubbed your nose agin it!' dat's what he say; but I too high-born and proud to move. My fader nebber moved for nobody,

and my moder once stood for tree weeks agin a pump, 'cause somebody said she'd no right dere."

"A woman of resolution," muttered Ira.

"Let him go on," said Harry; "he does not see us."

"So when dat venomous ole party, who was de ugliest man in de whole ob Pekin," pursued Ching-Ching—"and de more I look at ole Cutten, de more I see de strordinary likeness—when he tell me to go on, I rub my nose harder, and gib de windy a regular good lick wif my tongue. He make a rush at me wif him fist, I bob away, and de ole man go right through him shop-front. But he a very strong ole man, and cum up agin in a moment. I was ready for him, and when he rush at me, I put out my lilly fist, and hit him somewhar, and in a moment he was out ob sight."

Ching-Ching paused to give effect to the conclusion of his story, and the men listened intently, and wondered what was coming.

"They sarch de street for him remains," he said, solemnly, "but all dat dey find was two ob him front teeth, and one ob him boots, and den dere cum twelve men with a judy, and dey sat on de teeth and de boot, and return a werdick ob 'accidental calamity, brought on by intemperate habits,' and dey express a wish dat de police should be more careful, and recklemended dat one should allus be kep' at the corner wif de turncock ready to turn de water on in case ob fire."

The conclusion of this affecting narrative was hailed with every demonstration of delight by everybody except Cutten and Bill, who, of course, saw nothing in it.

"It's all brag," said the latter; "go in and win, Eddard."

"Besides," said Eddard, "I don't see wot the perliceman and the turncock have to do with it—it's a muddled up sort of story."

"I'm quite ready if de oder genlyman is," said Ching-Ching.

"Hat him, Heddard," said Bill Grunt, with very unnecessary emphasis.

Edward was in no hurry to be "at him;" in fact, he hung fire so palpably, that some of the men asked him if he had not better put it off till to-morrow. This had the desired effect, and he boldly advanced, Ching-Ching,

with his feet bound together by the ankle, quietly waiting for him.

"Mind," said Cutten, "no kicking."

"He'll want no hitting next," growled one of the lookers-on.

"Come on, Massa Cutten," said Ching-Ching.

With his right elbow level with his eye, and well drawn, Cutten came on very slowly, his left hand curled up in a curious fashion, preparatory for a blow. Ching-Ching kept his arm down, and never moved a muscle.

Fancying that he saw an opening, Edward rushed in, but Ching-Ching, with a curious hop of his tied legs, dodged on one side, and with a side-blow caught his opponent under the jaw, and knocked him nearly into the fire. He would, in truth, have fallen into it but for the friendly arm of a sailor which saved him.

"Oh, lor'!" he gasped, and sat upon the ground, rocking to and fro.

Bill Grunt was by his side in a moment.

"Hurt, Eddard?"

The unfortunate one shook his head mournfully, and held his jaw tightly. He appeared to be suffering acutely.

"Do you gib in, Massa Cutten?" asked Ching-Ching, hopping up.

"Hat him again, Eddard," urged Bill Grunt.

"I gib him one minute," said Ching-Ching; "arter dat de sponge must be trown up. Sammy, wha de sponge?"

"Haven't got none, Chingy."

"Den take my rumbrella, and chuck dat up when de minute hab 'spired."

Samson armed himself with that useful article, and once more Ching-Ching addressed his opponent.

"You going to fight agin?" he said.

"Hat him, Eddard," interposed Bill Grunt.

"Hat him yourself," cried Cutten, wrathfully, and kicking up with his wooden leg, he smote the companion of his riper years heavily in the wind.

"You're a hidiot," cried Bill, gasping with pain, and forthwith closed with him.

"One fight ober; trow up de rumbrella, Sammy," cried Ching-Ching, unfastening his legs. "Anoder fight on—make a ring, genlymen."

"What is all this about?" asked Harry, coming forward, with tears of laughter in his eyes. "Grunt! Cutten! give over."

"He ain't a-going to kick me about, where and when he likes," grunted Bill.

"I was riled, Bill," replied Cutten, very penitent; "but it was sech a crack on the jaw that no man could stand it. I axes your pardon, and I grants your grace."

"There, shake hands and be friends," said Harry. "It was all a mistake. Now, boys, to supper."

"Hurrah for de cap'en!" cried Ching-Ching.

"Hooror!" bawled Samson, in a voice that made the rafters ring again; "him de bully boy. I say, Chingy!"

"Well, ole boy?"

"Am dat story about dat wenomous party as kept de apple-shop quite de trufe?"

"Time and de rough ways ob de world," replied Ching-Ching, evasively, "hab impaired my memory a lilly bit, but I tink it somewhere near de mark."

"But how dat jury bring in such a wer-dick, Chingy?"

"It happen dis way," explained Ching-Ching, "it was de birfday ob de foreman, and all de judy get berry drunk."

"Oh, dat it!" said Samson, and perfectly satisfied, he boldly attacked the bacon and bread provided for supper.

Harry only confided in Ira with regard to the expedition he was bound upon at midnight, and he bade him watch for his return and to keep a light burning.

"If you catch the host lurking about," he added, "give him a gentke hint that I object to that sort of thing, and I have no doubt that he will take it."

Ira said that he would obey orders, and supper being over, an acting charade was proposed to while away the time. The characters were selected, the rest fell into their places as the audience, and a very good specimen of that class of entertainment was given.

It lasted until near midnight, and when it was over the men gathered round the fire for a final pipe. Harry and Tom took advantage of the opportunity to slip away.

The cabaret was closed and all dark, and they passed round the house and went out by the yard gate. Snow was falling again,

and the oil lamps in the street burned dimly.

Not a living person was to be seen.

"Not yet time," said Harry.

As he spoke, the figure of a woman emerged from the shadow of the cabaret doorway and walked briskly up the street.

"Let us follow," whispered our hero, and he and Ira moved off in the same direction.

Immediately afterward Gortska, their host, dropped from the first floor window of the house, and skulking under the shadows of the street, followed them.

[THE END.]

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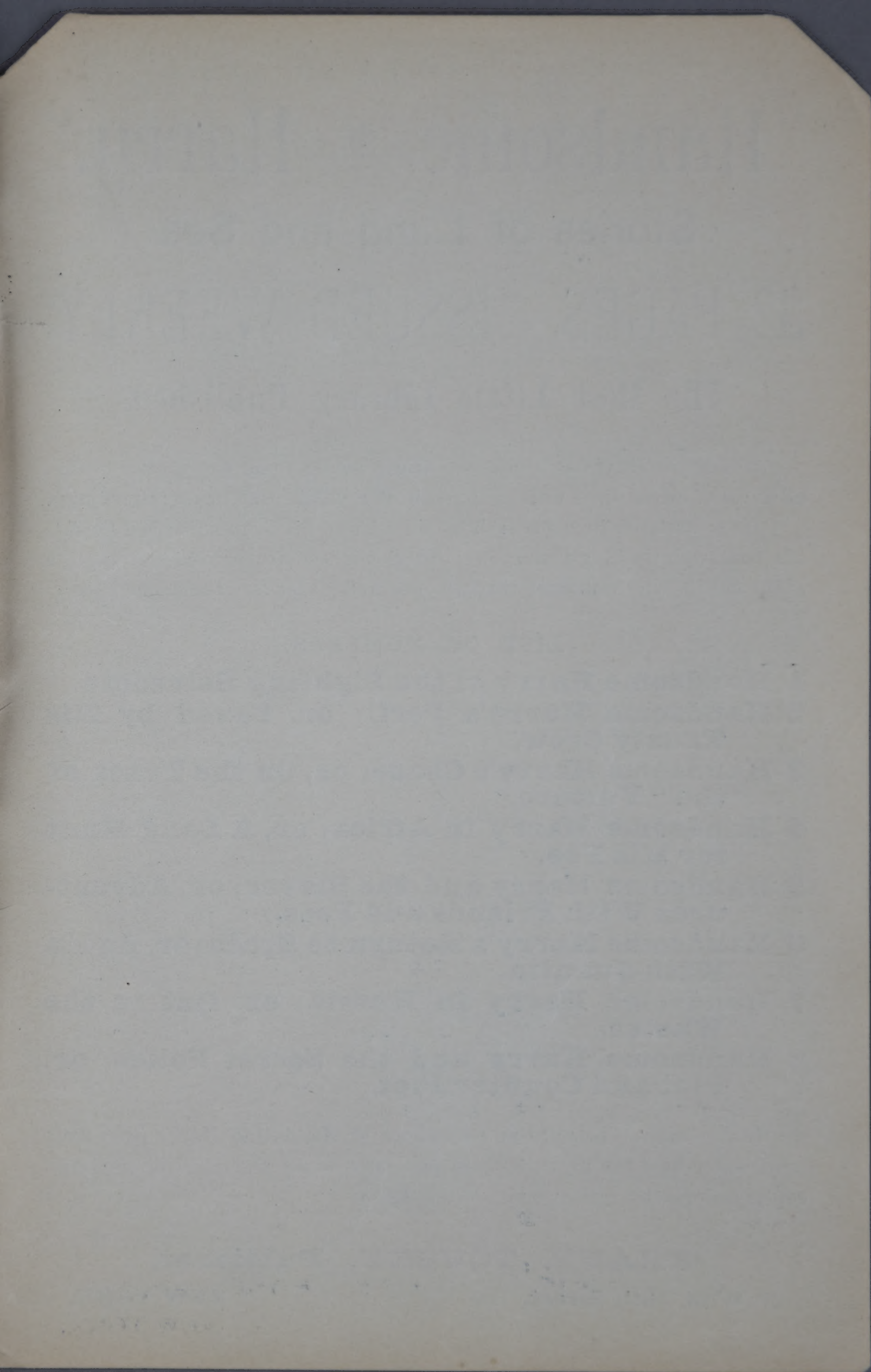
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